



Mr. Leoni as Arbaces.

N.C. Goodnight sculp.



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ARTAXERXES.

SERIOUS OPERA.

Taken from the

MANAGER'S BOOK

AT THE

Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED for the PROPRIETORS, and sold by RACHAEL
RANDALL, No. 116, Shoe-Lane, Fleet-Street; and, all
Bookfellers in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

M.DCC.LXXXVII.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COVENT-GARDEN.

✓ Artaxerxes,	—	Mrs. Kennedy.
Artabanes,	—	Mr. Darley.
Arbaces,	—	Mr. Leoni.
Rimenes,	—	Mr. King.
Mandane,	—	Mrs. Billington.
Semira,	—	Mrs. Morton.

Nobles, Guards, and Attendants.

ARTAXERXES.

The passages marked by inverted commas are omitted in the representation.

ACT I.

SCENE, *An inner Garden belonging to the Palace of the King of Persia. Moon-light.*

Mandane and Arbaces.

Man. STILL silence reigns around, suspicion
sleep

And unperceiv'd you may escape these walls.

Arb. Adieu, my love; O think on thy *Arbaces*.

Man. Yet stay, sweet youth; a few short minutes stay.

Arb. Ador'd *Mandane*! see the dawn appears.

DUETTINO. *Fair Aurora, pr'ythee stay;*
O retard unwelcome day;
Think what anguish rends my breast;
Thus caressing, thus carest;
From the idol of my heart,
Forc'd at thy approach to part.

Arb. Alas, thou know'st that for my love to thee,
The king, great *Xerxes*, thy too rigid father,
Has banish'd me the palace; should he know,

B.2

That,

That, in defiance of his stern command,
I have presum'd to scale this garden wall,
How little would a lover's plea avail,
When thou, his daughter, could'st not move his
pity.

Man. Thy noble father, mighty *Artabanes*,
Disposes at his will the heart of *Xerxes*;
And the young prince my brother, *Artaxerxes*,
Brought up with thee in virtuous emulation,
Honours thy worth, and boasts thy valued friend-
ship;
Their interest may soften his resentment.

Arb. Weak are their efforts, while his kingly
pride
Disdains to rank a princess with a subject.

Man. My spirits sink, my heart forgets to beat,
I have not fortitude to bear thy loss—
And must we part?—Then all good angels guard
thee!

*Adieu, thou lovely youth;
Let hope thy fears remove;
Preserve thy faith and truth,
But never doubt my love.*

[Exit

Arb. O cruel parting! How can I survive!
Divided thus from all that's sweet and fair;
From her, for whom alone I live!

Enter Artabanes.

Art. Son, *Arbaces*.

Arb. My father!

Art. Give me thy sword.

Arb. Sir, I obey.

Art. Here, take thou mine.

Arb. 'Tis drench'd in blood!

Art. Fly, hide it from all eyes;

Xerxes

ARTAXERXES,

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Xerxes, the king, this daring arm hath slain.

Art. Forbid it, heav'n!

Art. O much lov'd son!

Thy treatment was the spur to my revenge—
For thee I'm guilty.

Art. Wou'd I had ne'er been born!

Art. Let not weak scruples thwart my great
design;

Perhaps *Artabanes* shall be king of *Persia*.

Art. I'm all confusion—

Art. No more—be gone.

Art. O fatal day!—Unhappy, lost *Artabanes*.

Amidst a thousand racking woes,

I pant, I tremble, and I feel

Cold blood from ev'ry vein distill,

And clog my lab'ring heart.

* *I see my fair one's lost repose,*

* *And O! lament the fatal curse,*

* *That he who gave me life could thus*

* *From virtue's laws depart.*

Exit.

Art. Be firm, my heart.—In the pursuit of guilt,
The first advance admits not a retreat:
The royal blood to the last hateful drop,
Must then be shed. Conscience, thy checks are
vain—

The prince appears,—now art's my only refuge.

Enter Artaxerxes, Rimenes, and Guards.

Artax. Dear *Artabanes*, glad I meet thee here;
'The prince demands thy counsel,

Thy loyalty—revenge—

Artab. I tremble, Sir—

This dire injunction wants an explanation.

Artax. Disastrous fate—Yonder my father lies
Savagely murder'd!

B 3

Artab.

Artab. Ah! my ill-boding fears!
 Unsated thirst of empire!
 Alas!—Will nothing but a father's blood
 Allay thy heat, and quench thy raging fever!

Artax. Well I conceive—my faithless cruel brother—*Darius*—

Artab. Who but he at dead of night could penetrate

The palace? Who approach the royal bed?
 Nay more, his known ambition—

Artax. O, if here lives a heart that calls me friend,
 Or feels compassion for his slaughter'd king,
 Quick let him bring the traitor to our presence.

Artab. That welcome task be mine—
 Guards, follow me.

[*Going.*]

Artax. Yet stay—

Darius is the son of *Xerxes*.

Artab. Who kills the father is no more a son.

Behold on Lethe's dismal strand

Thy father's troubled spirit stand!

In his face what grief profound!

See he rolls his haggard eye:

Hark! Revenge! revenge! he cries;

And points to his still bleeding wound:

Obeys the call, revenge his death,

And calm the soul that gave thee breath. [Exit.

Artaxerxes going. Enter Semira,

Sem. Stay, *Artaxerxes*, stay.

Artax. Adieu, *Semira*.

Sem. And dost thou fly me? Go then, cruel prince,

No more shall ill-tim'd fondness importune thee.

Artax. Beauteous *Semira*, should I longer stay,
 There's such a syren sweetness in thy voice,
 'Twould lull me to forget my filial duty.

Sem. Away, ungrateful—

Artax.

ARTAXERXES.

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Artax. *Fair Semira, lovely maid,
Cease in pity to upbraid
My oppress'd but constant heart :
Full sufficient are the woes,
Which my cruel stars impose ;
Heaven, alas ! has done its part. [Exit.*

Sem. I fear some dread disaster—Say, *Rimenes*,
What means this strange confusion in the prince ?

Rim. *Xerxes is slain—*

Suspicion points the finger at *Darius* :

And *Artaxerxes* bears a dreadful conflict.

'Twixt filial duty to revenge his father,

And brotherly compassion for *Darius*.

Sem. O fatal deed ! th' effect of wild ambition ;
Heaven knows if *Artaxerxes*' life be safe.

Rim. Let fate be busy in destructive slaughter ;
We, blest with love, and seated on the shore,
Will view the destin'd shipwreck.

Sem. Think not that love can find a place to enter,
When the sad heart's surrounded with misfortunes ;
Leave me, *Rimenes*, to my troubled thoughts.

Rim. Your web of scorn is not so closely woven,
But I can see between each subtle thread,
Yet, born to love, undaunted I'll pursue thee :
Since hope inspires my breast, what you deny,
Ungrateful maid, kind fancy shall supply.

*When real joy we miss,
'Tis some degree of bliss
I' enjoy ideal pleasure,
And dream of hidden treasure
The soldier dreams of wars,
And conquers without scars ;
The sailor in his sleep
With safety ploughs the deep :*

So

ARTAXERXES.

*So I, thro' fancy's aid,
Enjoy my heavenly maid;
And blest with thee and love,
Am greater far than Jove.*

[Exit.]

Sem. Ye Gods, protectors of the *Persian* empire,
Preserve my *Artaxerxes*—Yet if he be blest—
Semira's state is wretched: *Xerxes* dead,
This prince will mount the throne:
Belov'd by me, and rais'd above my hopes,
The hand which he intreated when a subject,
When sovereign of *Persia* he'll disdain.

*How hard is my fate, How desp'rate my state,
When virtue and honour excite,
To suffer distress, Contented to blest
The object in whom I delight.*

Yet, midst all the woes, My soul undergoes

Thro' virtue's too rigid decree;

I'll scorn to complain, If the force of my pain

Awaken his pity for me.

[Exit.]

SCENE, *The Palace.*

Enter Mandane.

Man. Where do I fly?—Ah, hapless maid!
Thus in one fatal instant,
To lose a brother, father, and a lover.

Enter Artaxerxes.

Artax. Alas, *Mandane*!

Man. Does *Darius* live?

Or are thy guilty hands

Imbrued in brother's blood?

Artax. Fain would I shun that deed,

Which to prevent, I've search'd throughout the
palace

For *Artabanes* and *Darius*.——

But all in vain——

Man. See, *Artabanes* comes.

Enter

ARTAXERXES.

Enter Artabanes.

Artax. My friend!

Artab. I fought you, Sir—All is accomplish'd.

Artax. Ha! speak, explain!

Artab. Your father's death revenged,
Darius slain, and *Artaxerxes* now
Is *Persia's* King.

Artax. Oh, Gods!

Man. O dire misfortune!

Artab. Why that deep sigh, my liege? 'Twas
your command.

Artax. Alas! 'tis true, the guilt is only mine.

Artab. What guilt, my sovereign?
'Twas merely justice to your murder'd father.
'Take comfort, Sir;
And think that in *Darius'* death
A wicked, bloody parricide is punish'd.

Enter Semira.

Sem. Oh, *Artaxerxes*!

Artax. Say, fair *Semira*, why this seeming joy?

Sem. *Darius* is not guilty of the murder.

Man. What do I hear?

Artax. I'm struck with double horror.

Sem. Th' assassin is secur'd.

Artax. O quick proceed.

Sem. Your watchful centinels, when he had
leap'd

The garden-wall, o'ertook him as he fled;
His deep confusion, pallid countenance,
And sword yet reeking with the crimson blood,
Strongly proclaim him guilty.

Artax. But the name.

Sem. At my request to know it,
All hung their heads in silence.

Artab. Alas, it is my son. [*Aside.*

Artax. Must *Artaxerxes* then ascend the throne,
Distain'd

Distain'd with brother's blood?

Oh, I shall never taste of peace again. —

Quick, bring this traitor, that unbounded rage
May execute the vengeance he deserves. —

Hold, *Artabanes*, dear *Mandane*, stay.

Semira, leave me not in this distress —

Where is my friend *Arbaces*?

Artab. He was forbid the court by royal *Xerxes*,
For his presumptuous love of fair *Mandane*.

Artax. Fly, bring him to my arms—I here ab-
solve him.

Enter Rimenès with Arbaces prisoner.

Rim. Who in this royal presence would believe
Arbaces to be guilty?

Artab. How!

Artax. My friend!

Artab. My son!

Sem. My brother!

Man. Oh, ye Gods! my lover!

Artax. Would in the pangs of death I'd meet my
friend,

Rather than thus in fetters like a traitor!

Arb. I'm innocent.

Artax. O make but that appear,
And doubly 'twill endear thee to my love.

Arb. I am not guilty, that's my own plea.

Artab. This prudent caution answers to my
wish. [*Aside.*]

Man. But your resentment 'gainst the king —

Arb. Was just.

Artax. Did'st thou not fly?

Arb. I did.

Man. This thy reserve —

Arb. Is requisite.

Artax. And thy down-cast confusion —

Arb. Is suited to th' occasion.

Rim.

Rim. This bloody sword— [Shewing it.

Arb. Was in the scabbard when you took me prisoner.

Artab. And can'st thou yet deny the cruel deed?

Arb. Great Sir, I still assert my innocence.

Artab. Audacious boy! thus obstinate in ill,
Thy fight's my torment, and this deed my shame.

Arb. And does my father join in my destruction?

Artab. Thy father! away, I renounce the soft claim!

Thou spot on my honour, thou blast to my fame.

Let justice the traitor to punishment bring,

His father he lost when he murder'd his king. [Exit.

Arb. Ye cruel Gods, what crime have I committed

To draw relentless vengeance on my head?

Semira! sister! hear me with compassion.

[Exit Semira.

* *Semira.* Acquit thee of this foul offence,
‘Return with spotless innocence;
‘Then shall my hapless brother see
‘That never sister lov'd like me.’

Arb. Appearance, I must own, is strong against me,

But truth is on my side—I'm innocent.

Artax. Pray heav'n thou may'st; but till the law decide

You must remain a prisoner. [Exit.

Arb. Ah, dear *Rimenes*, pity my hard fate—
My friend!

Rim. I am no traitor's friend—Adieu. [Exit.

Arb. Beauteous *Mandane*, turn at least and hear me.

Man. Away! you sue in vain. [Going.

Arb. O stay, I charge thee—
Think on thy former love.

Man.

Man. 'Tis turn'd to hate.

Arb. And you believe me guilty?

Man. I am convinc'd.

Arb. O too lovely, too unkind,
If my lips no credit find,
Pierce my breast, my heart shall prove
Strong in virtue, firm in love.
Guiltless, wretched, left forlorn,
And worse than murder'd by thy scorn.
[Exit guarded.]

RECITATIVE ACCOMPANIED.

Man. Dear and beloved shade of my dead father,
Thee I invoke to spirit up my rage,
Left fond credulity too strongly plead,
And turn my purpose from a just revenge;
For, oh, I feel the tyrant love within,
He rends my breast, he struggles for *Arbaces*:
Help me, kind Gods, to tear away his image.

*Fly, soft ideas, fly; That neither tear nor sigh,
My virtue may betray.*

*Nature's great call, That governs all,
A daughter must obey.*

*Alas, my soul denies
To hear revenge's cries!*

*Dare not, fond heart, To take his part,
But drive his form away.*

[Exit.]

A C T II.

SCENE, *The Royal Apartments.*

[Enter Artaxerxes and Artabanes.]

Artax. GUARDS, Speed ye to the tower,
And instantly conduct *Arbaces* to me.

Art.

Art. Good, my lord
Think not the partial fondness of a father
Has urg'd this counsel.

Artax. No: 'tis justice dictates;
He still persists that he is innocent,
And his fair truth was ne'er till now suspected;
Will withdraw— [Going.

O, reconcile the safety of your son
With your king's peace, and the honour of his
throne.

*In infancy our hopes and fears
Were to each other known;
And friendship in our riper years,
Has twin'd our hearts in one.
O clear him then from this offence;
Thy love, thy duty prove;
Restore him with that innocence
Which first inspir'd my love.*

[Exit.

[Aside.

Art. So far my great resolve succeeds.
Approach, *Arbaces*.

Enter Arbaces and Guards.

And you, his guards, in the next chamber wait.

[Exeunt guards,

Arb. My father!

Art. Ever watchful to preserve thee,
I artfully have gained from *Artaxerxes*
The liberty to question thee:
Take then this fortunate occasion,
And, by a secret way, which I will shew thee,
Delude the guards, and fly.

Arb. Sir, my escape
Would rise in evidence to prove me guilty.

Art. 'Tis folly all; I give thee liberty;
From the king's wrath I match thee; and, perhaps,
The public voice shall call thee to the throne.

Arb. What said you, Sir?

C

Art.

Art. Long have you known
The people's hatred to the royal blood :
Away.

The sight of you will fire the mut'neous troops,
Whose leaders to your interest are sworn.

Art. I turn a rebel ! Horror's in the thought—
Your pardon, Sir ;—Is this a father's counsel ?
Guards, enter quick, bring me again my chains—
Conduct me to my prison. [*Enter guards.*]

Art. I burn with rage.

Art. Yet calm this transport—think on my affliction.

Sir—father—turn—O grant one kind adieu.

Art. Unworthy boy ! I'm deaf to thy request.

Art. Disdainful you fly me,
In anger exclaim ;
All comfort deny me,
And murder my fame.
No grief can the heart
To pity incline,
Than bears not a part
In sorrow like mine.
Nature's tender plea is vain ;
Welcome then my chains again.
O rigour unjust !
O counsel accurst !
Ambition ill-plac'd,
My virtue disgrac'd ;
The pains I endure
Death only can cure.
Disdainful you fly me, &c.

[*Exit with the guards.*]

Enter Rimenès.

Rim. Why, my dear friend, so pensive, so inactive ?

Art.

Art. My wayward son, that bar to my ambition,
At once rejects both liberty and crowns.

Rim. Let us away, and force him from the tower.

Art. The present time may better be employ'd,
If *Artaxerxes* perish by our hands.—
Let not my friend betray me.

Rim. I, my lord!
Forbid it, gratitude! My abject state
Cast me below the notice of mankind,
Till your great pow'r exalted me to honour.

Art. Small recompence for thy good services;
But should kind fortune smile on this attempt,
Then judge if *Artabanes* loves his friend.

Rim. My hand, my heart, are guided by your
will.

Art. I have observed thy passion for *Semira*—
Spare thy confusion; and let this convince
Thee of my love—*Semira* shall be thine.

Rim. Thanks, gracious Sir; my joy is past ex-
pression.

Art. Come hither, daughter. [Seeing *Semira*.

Enter Semira.

In this valiant chief
Behold thy lord and husband.

Sem. Cruel sound!
O Sir, reflect—Is this a time for nuptials,
When my unhappy brother—

Art. Peace, no more!
'Tis my command—reply not, but obey. [Exit.

Sem. I tremble—hear me, Sir—O, if you love
me,
Prevent this marriage.

Rim. Sure *Semira* mocks me!

Sem. Tho' by constraint you seize my helpless
hand,

My heart disdains the brutal violence.

Rim. Give me thy beauty, and reserve thy heart;
Thou keep'st the worst, I gain the better part.

To sigh and complain, Alike I disdain,

Contented my wish to enjoy;

I scorn to reflect On a lady's neglect,

Or barter my peace for a toy.

In love, as in war, I laugh at a fear,

And if my proud enemy yield,

The joy that remains Is to lead her in chains,

And glean the rich spoils of the field.

[Exit

Sem. How many links to dire misfortune's chain
Are woven in one day!

Enter Mandane.

Stay, dear *Mandane*—

Why this haste?

Man. I attend the council.

Sem. I'll too attend, if aught within my power
May help my brother.

Man. Our views are different; thou desir'st to
save him;

I seek his death.

Sem. Is this a language for *Artabace's* lover?

Man. It well becomes the daughter of dead

Xerxes.

Sem. Away, thou cruel maid!

Enforce his crime, and urge his speedy death.

But first prepare your heart, and quite erase

The soft remembrance of your former passion,

The tender hopes and fears, warm vows of truth,

Fond sighs exchang'd; and, last, the sweet idea

Of that dear form, which first inspir'd your love.

Man. Ah, barbarous *Semiramis*, thus to wake

My guilty pity, rebel to my duty.

If

ARTAXERXES.

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*If o'er the cruel tyrant love,
 A conquest I believ'd;
 The flatt'ring error cease to prove,
 O let me be deceiv'd.
 Forbear to fan the gentle flame,
 Which love did first create;
 What was my pride is now my shame,
 And must be turn'd to hate.
 Then call not to my wav'ring mind,
 The weakness of my heart;
 Which, ah! I feel too much inclin'd
 To take the traitor's part.* [Exit.

*Sem. Which fatal evil shall I first oppose:
 My princess, brother, this detested lover,
 The king, my father, all are enemies;
 And each attacks me in some tender part:
 While I exert my power against the one,
 The others rush on my defenceless breast.*

*If the river's swelling waves
 Overflow their usual bed,
 Scarce th' affrighted peasant saves
 From the flood his homely shed.
 Tho' he stop one open shore,
 Where the waters swiftly glide,
 At an hundred places more
 Rushes in th' impetuous tide.* [Exit;

SCENE, *The Council Chamber, with a Throne, Seat on the Side for the Grandees of the Kingdom, &c. Artaxerxes, preceded by Guards, afterwards by the Nobles, followed by Mandane, Semira, Artabanes, and Rimenes.*

*Artax. Ye solid pillars of the Persian empire,
 Behold me fated to sustain the cares
 Of my paternal throne; and much I'm griev'd
 That*

That my lov'd father's death so heavy lies
Upon my absent friend; but since *Arbaces*
Denies this accusation, let the father,
Whose virtues have endear'd him to our favour,
Be the son's judge, to cast him or acquit him:
In him is vested all our regal power.

Man. In him! does friendship so prevail o'er
duty?

Artax. Not so, *Mandane*, for his loyal father
Has double reason for severity.
I ought to vindicate the death of *Xerxes*;
But if *Arbaces* be the criminal,
His father, with more rigour, will revenge
His monarch's death, and his own public shame.

Artab. Ah, Sir, what trial!

Artax. Worthy of thy virtue——

If any think me partial, let him speak.

Rim. This silence is a gen'ral approbation.

Sem. My bro her comes.

Man. Ah me!

Artax. Give your attention,

[*Ascends the throne, the grandes sit.*]

Man. (*aside*) Now prudence guide the reins of
my affection.

Cease, busy heart, to flutter in my breast.

Enter Arbaces in chains, guarded.

Arb. Am I so much the hatred of all *Persia*,
That it unites to witness my misfortune?
My sovereign!

Artax. O *Arbaces*, call me friend!
For till thy crime is prov'd, that title's mine;
But as a name so tender ill becomes
Th' impartial judge, thy most unhappy cause
I have assign'd to worthy *Artabanes*.

Arb. My father judge!

Artax.

Artax. Yes, he.

Arb. I'm chill'd with horror.

Artab. *Arbaces*, in this presence thou appear'st
To be the murderer of royal *Xerxes*.

The circumstances urg'd are these—

That thou hadst entertain'd presumptuous love

Of this most honour'd princess;

For which, by *Xerxes* banish'd from the court,

You sought revenge, and found it in his death.

Arb. Nay more, the bloody sword, the time, the
place,

And flight, conspire to fix the guilt on me:

And yet my heart is free;—I'm innocent.

Artab. Demonstrate that, and so appease the
wrath

Of this offended princess.

Arb. Ah! forbear;

• If you would have me with a steady mind,

• Support my sufferings, make not the assault

• In such a tender part.—Barbarous father!

Artab. Rash young man, be silent.

• Consider where thou art, and who attends thee.

• *Man.* Be still, my beating heart.— [Aside.

• *Artax.* But this thy crime

• Requires defence, or a sincere repentance.

• *Arb.* My king, I find no crime to be de-
fended,

Nor motive for repentance. That's my answer.

• *Artab.* O filial love! [Aside.

Man. Whether he plead or not,

He equally is guilty—Where is justice?

Is this the father that should vindicate

His murder'd king, and his own public shame?

Arb. Cruel *Mandane*! does thy voice condemn
me?

Man. Bear up, my heart.

[Aside.
Artab.

Artab. Your just resentment, princess,
Spurs on my lazy virtue.—
Let *Persia* then, in *Artabanes'* rigour,
Record his justice and his loyalty.— [*Takes the pen.*
My son I here condemn—[*Signs*—*Arbaces* dies.

Man. Oh, Gods!

Artax. Suspend awhile the rash decree.

[*Artabanes gives the paper to Artaxerxes.*

Artab. 'Tis sign'd, my liege—I have fulfill'd my
duty.

Artax. Unnatural sentence!

Sem. O inhuman father!

Man. Alas, my tears betray me!

Arb. Weeps *Mandane*

In pity of my cruel destiny?

Man. Pleasure may start a tear as well as grief.)

Artab. Now I have finished the stern judge's
part,

Permit, O king, the feelings of a father.

Pardon, my son, the effect of tyrant duty;

Suffer with patience; and remember this,

The worst of ev'ry evil is the fear.

Arb. My patience, Sir, begins at last to leave
me:

‘ In view o’ th’ world, to find myself expos’d

‘ A seeming guilty object; all my hopes

‘ Cut off i’ th’ bloom, the morn of life my end;

‘ Hated by *Persia*, by my king,

‘ And her whom I adore; to know that you,’

Barbarous father,—(Ah, I lose my life?)

Adieu.—

[*Going.*

Artab. I freeze.

[*Aside.*

Man. I die.

Arb. Stay, rash *Arbaces*!

[*Returning.*

Where would’st thou go? Ah, Sir, forgive your
son:

Behold

ARTAXERXES.

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Behold me at your feet—
Excuse the transports of my frantic grief;
Shed all my blood, 'tis yours.—I'll not complain;
But kiss the honour'd hand that sign'd my death.

Artab. Enough—O rise.

Thou hast but too much reason to lament:
But know—(O Gods!)—Take one embrace, and
part.

Arb. By that belov'd embrace,

By this my fond adieu,

Deplore my hapless case;

Condemn'd, alas! for you,

Appease my love, my truth commands,

Yourself preserve, my king defend!

My sentence I obey,

To filial virtue true;

And scarce have pow'r to say

A long and last adieu!

[Exit guarded]

Man. Ah me! at poor *Arbaces*, parting

I feel the stroke of death.

Artab. *Mandane*, now I hope you're satisfied;

For, at the price of my paternal love,

I have, to sate your vengeance,

Sacrific'd my son.

Man. Savage, no more—

Avoid my presence: dare not to view the light

Of sun or stars; but hide thy cruel head

Within the deepest bowels of the earth.

Artab. Is then my virtue—

Man. Silence, inhuman!

Artab. Did not *Mandane's* rage excite my jus-
tice?

Man.

Man. The daughter ought to vindicate the father;
But thou, a father, should'st have sav'd thy son.

*Monster away! From cheerful day,
To the gloomy desert fly:
Paths explore, Where lions roar,
And devouring tigers lie.
Tho' for food They wade in blood,
All to save their young agree;
Ev'ry creature, Fierce by nature,
Harmless is compar'd to thee.* [Exit,

‘ *Artax.* See, lov'd *Semira*,
‘ How heaven conspires the ruin of *Arbaces*.
‘ *Sem.* Inhuman tyrant!
‘ You first destroy'd your friend,
‘ And then bewail him.
‘ *Artax.* I to thy father's will his life committed;

‘ How was I then a tyrant?
‘ All *Persia* knows my friendship for *Arbaces*,
‘ And faithful love for thee.
‘ *Sem.* I thought you once
‘ A tender lover and a generous friend;
‘ But in one instant you have prov'd yourself
‘ In friendship false, and treacherous in love.

‘ This bosom a stranger to rest,
‘ Resentment and pity assail;
‘ As both for dominion contest,
‘ So both, to my sorrow, prevail:
‘ My heart in this desperate state,
‘ To give each assailant its due,
‘ Now bleeds for my brother's hard fate,
‘ And burns with resentment to you. [Exit.

Artax.

Artax. O, *Artabanes*!

Artab. Lament not, Sir, but leave complaints to me;

I am the most unhappy of mankind.

Artax. 'Thy woe must needs be great
' When mine is insupportable.

My pity meant, assigning him to thee,
That thy paternal love should set him free;
But thou, a father of affection void,
By doom of death thy offspring hast destroy'd.

*Can salt tears or loud-lamenting
Now thy sentence past prevent;
Ah, too late is all repenting,
Thou with grief thy heart is rent.
But since guiltless I believe him,
I'll his desprate state attend;
From disgraceful chains relieve him,
Aid his flight, and save my friend.*

[Exit with attendants.]

RECITATIVE. ACCOMPANIED.

Artab. At length my soul has room t'indulge its grief——

What racking thoughts surround the guilty breast—
O my dear son, forgive the piercing woes
Which my soul deeds inflict upon thy youth;
I come to save thee from the jaws of death,
And pay thy virtues with a kingly throne.

*Thou like the glorious sun,
Thy splendid course shall run:
What tho' the night obscure his light,
When prison'd in the west;
The day returns, Again he burns,
The god of day confess.*

[Exit.]

[ACT

ARTAXERXES.

A C T III.

SCENE, A Prison.

Arbaces, in a melancholy posture.

Arietta. **WHY** is death for ever late,
 To conclude a wretch's woe?
 Those who live in happy state,
 Feel too soon th' untimely blow.

*Enter Artaxerxes.**Artax.* *Arbaces!*

Arb. Gracious Heaven, what's this I see!
 Does royal *Artaxerxes* deign to visit
 The wretch *Arbaces* in this horrid gloom!

Artax. Pity and friendship brought me here to
 save thee.

Arb. To save me!

Artab. Yes. That secret passage leads
 To life and liberty; then quickly fly—
 Remember *Artaxerxes*, and be happy.

Arb. Your pardon, Sir: the world esteems me
 guilty;

Then let me die; your honour, Sir, requires it.
 Happy my exit, having once preserv'd
 My sovereign's life, and now his spotless honour.

Artax. Such noble sentiments can ne'er pro-
 ceed

From guilty minds—Belov'd *Arbaces*, fly—

As friend, I beg thee to preserve thyself;
 But if that fails—as sovereign, I command thee.

Arb. In gratitude to thy exalted friendship,
 I'll quit this scene of horror and despair.

But oh! thus exil'd, I shall only fly,
 Restless to tread the paths of misery.

Water

Water parted from the sea.

*May increase the river's tide ;
To the bubbling fount may flee,
Or thro' fertile vallies glide ;
Yet in search of lost repose,
Doom'd like me, far lorn to roam,
Still it murmurs as it flows,
Till it reach its native home.* [Exit.]

Artax. That front, secure in conscious innocence,
Defies the charge of guilt : affliction's veil
Can never quite eclipse the inward light,
That from a noble soul darts forth its rays,
When in the countenance the heart is seen.

*Tho' oft a cloud, with envious shade,
Conceals the face of day ;
The sun is still in flames array'd,
His beams immortal, not decay'd ;
Soon the gloomy veil retires ;
He darts each powerful ray,
And light and heat expires.* [Exit.]

Enter Artabanes, with a train of Conspirators.

Artab. My son *Arbaces*—Where art thou retir'd ?
Sure he should hear my voice—what ho, *Arbaces* ?
O heaven ! Guards, watch the entrance of the prison
Till I can find my son. [Exit.]

Enter Rimenes.

Rim. Not yet arriv'd !
Sir, *Artabanes* !

[Exit.]

Re-enter Artabanes.

Artab. O unhappy father !
My son I seek in vain—my blood grows chill ;
I—fear—I doubt perhaps in—

Re-enter

Re-enter Rimenès.

Rim. Artabanes !

Artab. Where is Arbaces ?

Rim. Is he not with you ?

Artab. O cruel gods ! th' unfortunate has perish'd.

*Rim. Suspicion always borders on extremes ;
And might not Artaxerxes or Mandane,
The friend of love, have procur'd his flight ?
What strange delay is this !—let's to our task ;
Behold the way that leads us to the palace.*

*Art. And what great enterprize shall I accomplish,
My son being lost ?*

*Rim. What, have you then, for nought,
Secur'd the royal guards ; and I, the troops ?
Determine, Sir ? This instant Artaxerxes
Prepares to take the coronation oath ;
The sacred cup is by your order poison'd ;
And shall we then so basely—*

Art. O, my friend !

Arbaces lost, for whom should I engage ?

*Rim. Thy son Arbaces from thy hand expects
The throne, if living ; and, if dead, revenge.*

*Artab. That, that alone recalls my fleeting spirit ;
Lead on, kind friend ; my fate depends on thee.*

Rim. I'll lead thee on to joyful victory.

O let the danger of a son

Excite vindictive ire ;

The prospect of a kingdom won

Should light ambition's fire.

To wounded minds, revenge is balm ;

With vigour they engage,

And sacrifice a pleasing calm,

To a mere pleasing rage.

[Exit. with conspirators.]

RECI-

RECITATIVE ACCOMPANIED,

Artab. Ye adverse Gods! y'ave found the only way
To quell my vast ambition; perplexing doubt,
Whether my son yet lives, awakens fear;
And the dire image of despair starts up,
Unnerves my arm, and checks my daring soul.

*O much-lov'd son, if death
Has stol'n thy vital breath,*

*I'll share thy hapless fate;
But ere the dagger drinks my blood,
A murder'd king, at Lethe's flood,*

*The tidings shall relate.
Bid Charon cease from toil,*

*And rest upon his oar,
Till I attain the happy soil,
Where we shall part no more.*

[Exit.

SCENE, Mandane's Apartment.

Enter Mandane and Semira.

Man. Perhaps the king releas'd *Arbaces*.

Sem. No—rather destroy'd him.

Man. How!

Sem. 'Tis known to all;
In secret he resign'd his wretched life.

Man. O hapless youth! O tidings worse than death!

Sem. I hope your vengeance now is satisfied—
Or would you other victims?—speak.

Man. I cannot;
Light cares are ever soften'd by complaint:
But such as mine arrest the pow'r of speech.

Sem. Ne'er liv'd a heart more lost to sense of pity:
All eyes in *Persia* wail his hapless fate;
But yours are dry.

Man. The deeper my affliction:

D 2

Small

Small is the grief that vents itself in tears.

Sem. Go, if not satisfied, and feast your eyes
Upon the slaughter'd spoils of my dear brother;
With secret joy, number his bloody wounds.

Man. Be silent—leave me.

Sem. Never; while thou liv'st
I'll haunt thee like a spirit, and my wrongs
Shall dash thy hopes with bitterness and woe.

Man. You think me cruel, and denounce re-
venge—

Ah! how have I deserv'd thy enmity?

Let not rage, thy bosom firing,

Pity's softer claim remove;

Spare a heart that's just expiring,

Forc'd by duty, rack'd by love.

Each ungentle thought suspending,

Judge of mine, by thy soft breast;

Nor, with rancour, never ending,

Heap fresh sorrows on th' oppress'd.

Let not rage, thy bosom firing, &c.

Heaven, that every joy has cross'd,

Ne'er my wretched state can mend;

I, alas! at once have lost,

Father, brother, lover, friend.

Let not rage, &c.

[Exit.

Sem. What have I done! Alas, I vainly thought,
Dividing grief, to lessen my affliction;
These cruel insults, vented on *Mandana*,
Have pierced her breast, and not reliev'd my own.

'Tis not true, that in our grief,

'Others weeping in distress,

'To our troubles bring relief,

'Making each misfortune less.

No, when sore oppress'd by fate,

'Better 'tis to sigh alone,

Than

ARTAXERXES.

29

*'Than support a double weight,
'Others sorrows, and our own.* [Exit.

Enter Arbaces.

Arb. Not here my searching eyes can find *Mandane*
Fain would my heart, before eternal exile,
Indulge its fondness with a last adieu.
Perhaps, this way—but whither do I wander?
Rash man—O heavenly powers, behold her there!
My spirits fail me—yet I'll speak—*Mandane!*

Enter Mandane.

Man. Ye powers! *Arbaces!* and at liberty!

Arb. A friendly hand unlock'd my cruel fetters.

Man. Ah! fly, be gone.

Arb. How can I part, for ever, from such beauty?

Man. Perfidious traitor! what would'st thou
with me?

Arb. Am I no longer dear to my *Mandane*?

Man. Thou art become the object of my hate.

Arb. Barbarous maid! thy death shall end thy
scorn.

I fly to meet my fate—Adieu—for ever. [Going.

Man. Hear me, *Arbaces.*

Arb. Ha! what torture more?

Man. I cannot speak.

Arb. O Heaven!

Man. Fly, save thyself.

Arb. What means my princess?—this returning
pity—

Man. Does not arise from love—but fly—and
live—

DUETTO.

Arb. For thee I live, my dearest;

But if I meet disdain,

For thee, my dear, I'll die.

D 3

Man.

Man. *How lovely thou appearest,
My blushes will explain.
I can no more reply.*

Arb. *Then, hear me.*

Man. *No.*

Arb. *Thou art—*

Man. *Divide not thus my heart;
Leave me—in pity go.*

Both. *Ye Gods, that torture so,
Some timely respite send;
When will your torture end?*

SCENE. *A Temple, and Throne, with a Crown and Sceptre; the Image of the Sun, with a lighted Altar.*

Artaxerxes, Artabanes, Nobles, &c.

Artax. To you, my people, much belov'd, I offer
Myself, not less a father, than a king:
Your native rights, your customs, and your laws,
With jealous care I ever will maintain,
And raise up treasure in my people's hearts.

Artab. Here is the sacred cup—
Your solemn oath must bind the lasting tie;
Fulfil th' accustom'd rites—and drink thy death.
[*Aside.*

RECITATIVE ACCOMPANIED.

Artax. Resplendent God, by whom sweet April
blooms,
Thou genial beam, that warms us and enlightens,
Look awful down; and if my treach'rous lips
Have utter'd falsehood, may this wholesome draught
Change, as it passes, into deadly poison.

Enter Semira hastily.

Sem. Fly quick, my liege; thousands of rebel
troops

Surround

Surround the palace, by *Rimenes* led ;
Your death is plotted, and your guards corrupted.

Artax. O Gods !

Artab. What fear you, Sir ? My single presence
Shall quell this tumult, and protect my king. [*Exit.*

Artax. Away, my friend, to victory or death.

Enter Mandane.

Man. Hold, brother, the rebellious crew are fled.

Artax. Say how, *Mandane* ?

Man. Led by false *Rimenes*,

They forc'd the gates, and enter'd, when *Arbac*

Departing to eternal banishment,

His single breast oppos'd, and swore to die

In his great master's cause : all dropp'd their arms,

Except that daring rebel at their head ;

On him *Arbaces* like a lion flew,

Clove thro' his helmet, slew him, and revenged
thee.

Artax. Where's my preserver—bring him to my
arms. *Exeunt Officers, with Guards.*

He murder *Xerxes* ! Impious supposition !

Man. My heart respires !

Sem. O loyal brother !

Man. Valour suppress'd, now springs again to glory.

The soldier, tir'd of war's alarms,

Forswears the clang of hostile arms,

And scorns the spear and shield :

But if the brazen trumpet sound,

He burns with conquest to be crown'd,

And dares again the field.

Enter Artaxerxes and Arbaces.

Arb. Behold, my king; *Arbaces* at thy feet.

rtax. O still my friend ! come to my grateful
breast.

Man.

Man. Yet that my brother may with better
grace

Reward this deed, and satisfy the people,
Some reason give us for the bloody sword,
Thy timorous flight, and all that wak'd suspicion?

Arb. If deeds, not words, proclaim a loyal heart,
Permit me to be silent—I'm innocent.

Artax. Confirm it with a solemn imprecation,
And of a truth, as *Persia's* law prescribes,
That vessel drain'd shall be the sacred pledge.

Arb. I am prepar'd.

Artab. O cruel Gods! if my son drinks he dies!

RECITATIVE ACCOMPANIED.

Arb. Resplendent God, by whom sweet *April*
blooms,

Thou genial beam that warms us and enlightens!

Artab. (*Aside*) O wretched father!

Arb. If my treacherous lips
Have utter'd falshood, may this wholesome draught
Change, as it passes—

Artab. Hold, 'tis poison.

Artax. What fury urg'd thee to so vile a deed?

Artab. Away, disguise! the draught was meant
for thee;

But my paternal fondness has betray'd me.

I murder'd *Xerxes*; and, to gain the throne,
Would have destroy'd thee too.

Artax. Wretch, thou shalt die.

Arb. Then I disdain to live.

Artax. *Mandane* shall reward thy spotless virtue;
And thy fair sister shall partake our throne:

But for that traitor—

Arb. I will die for him:

My blood is his, and shall atone his crimes.

Artax. Thy loyalty and virtue, injured youth,
Shall change his sentence into banishment:

Make

Make no reply, his exile is for life.

Man. Sure heaven inspir'd the merciful decree;
Arbaces and *Semira* must approve it;
 Tho' for his crimes the father justly suffers,
 His life is spar'd, that you, his guiltless children,
 May not be ever wretched in his death.

CHORUS. *Live to us, to empire live!*
Great Augustus, long may'st thou
From the subject world receive
Laurel wreaths t' adorn my brow.

DUETTO. *Of his country ever free,*
There the royal father see!
To the patron of our laws,
Pierce the air with loud applause.

DUETTO. *Virtue in his soul resides;*
In his truth the world confides.

CHORUS. *To the patron of our laws,*
Pierce the air with loud applause.

DUETTO. *Pity from the throne descending,*
How the monarch it endears;
When with justice, mercy blending,
In the king a God appears!

DUETTO. *Tyrants claim, with iron sceptre,*
Duty which our fears impart;
But our gentle kind protector,
Monarch reigns o'er every heart.

CHORUS. *Live to us, to empire live!*
Great Augustus, long may'st thou
From the subject world receive
Laurel wreaths t' adorn thy brow.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

F I N I S.

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